

STAT

The New York Times _____
 The Washington Times _____
 The Wall Street Journal _____
 The Christian Science Monitor _____
 New York Daily News _____
 USA Today 10-A
 The Chicago Tribune _____

Date 1 OCT '87

STAT

PATRICIA NELSON LIMERICK

Guest columnist

Keep it a 'sweet land of liberty'

BOULDER, Colo. — If only William Casey were still alive, one sometimes thinks, then just imagine all of the questions he would answer for us.

The idea is, of course, pure fantasy. If Casey were alive, he would be stonewalling, evading, or maybe even lying. And we would still have plenty of questions for which we could not get answers.

If he had lived into the summer of the Iran-contra hearings, then Casey would no doubt have hired one of those expensive-but-effective Washington lawyers to sit next to him at the hearings and shout the requisite, "Mr. Chairman, I have never seen a client so outrageously bullied."

Casey was not going to change his mind or rethink his actions. Like many influential men of his generation, Casey evidently formed his thinking during World War II. He then

carried over attitudes and approaches appropriate to fighting Nazis in a declared war, and applied them to Sandinistas in an undeclared war.

So William Casey died before he could be questioned, and the major upshot of that may well be that some Washington law firm lost an otherwise guaranteed fee.

We are left instead, with questions we must ask ourselves. How do we live with Casey's legacy and the expansion of intelligence-gathering forces beyond their legitimate range?

When I finished reading an excerpt from Bob Woodward's *Veil*, an almost silly image came to mind: of myself and other students in elementary school in Banning, Calif., 30 years ago singing, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing."

We were, it seemed clear at first, fools. With the doings of

Patricia Nelson Limerick is the author of The Legacy of Conquest: the Unbroken Past of the American West.

William Casey, with covert intrusions into the "liberties" of other countries, with Casey's instinctive, emotional, all-too-representative conviction that the bad behavior of our enemies justifies our imitating them in method, it seems that only fools — and ideally, 6-year-old fools protected from current events — could use the phrase "sweet land of liberty" with a straight face.

But embarrassment over the conflict between the nation's ideals and the nation's practices will not help us to recover from the doings of Casey.

Recovery requires us to make clear that the "land of liberty" is an image we *mean*, not an image we offer to children who don't know better.